

Decision Memo
Burnett Inlet Fish Hatchery Continuation
USDA Forest Service
Tongass National Forest
Wrangell Ranger District
Wrangell, Alaska

BACKGROUND

The special use authorizations for a portion of the fish hatchery, a private residence and hydroelectric facilities associated with the Burnett Inlet Fish Hatchery (BIH) expired December 31, 2018. The Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA), having held those authorizations since 1998, applied to continue the occupancy and use for the portions of the BIH on National Forest System lands.

The environmental effects from the development of a fish hatchery at the site was analyzed and documented in an Environmental Impact Statement January 19, 1977. Other environmental analysis for continuation of the occupancy and use, and changes to project facilities, have been completed as needed since 1977.



Figure 1 Burnett Inlet Hatchery

DECISION

I have decided to continue the special use authorization for portions of the fish hatchery, a private residence and the hydroelectric facilities on National Forest System lands, for another 20 years, from 2020 through 2039. The permit will authorize operation and maintenance of all existing activities and facilities on the National Forest. See attached location map.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as the issuance of a new special use authorization for a new term to replace an

existing or expired special use authorization when the only changes are administrative, there are no changes to the authorized facilities or increases in the scope or intensity of authorized activities, and the applicant or holder is in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the special use authorization. 36 CFR 220.6 Section (e) (15).)

This category applies because the special use authorizations associated with for the BIH have expired. The proposed action is to issue new authorizations for a new term. No changes to the authorized facilities or increases of activities are proposed. SSRAA is in full compliance with the terms and conditions of its past special use authorizations.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I considered resource conditions identified in agency procedures in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – A Biological Evaluation for sensitive plants was completed in February 2018, and no R10 Sensitive Plant Species were found. Also there are no threatened or endangered wildlife species. Continuing to authorize the BIH will maintain existing levels and use of wildlife habitat.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – There are no municipal watersheds present in the project area. The degree of effect on flood plains and wetlands in the project area will not change with continuing the occupancy and use.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – There are no congressionally designated wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas present in the project area.
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – The BIH is located in the Mosman Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) (No. 233). There are no existing roads. Continuing the occupancy and use for the BIH will not change the conditions in the Mosman IRA.
- Research natural areas – There are no research natural areas present in the project area.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – There are no American Indian or Alaska Native religious or cultural sites in the project area. The Wrangell District Ranger consulted with the Wrangell tribal government for continuation of the authorizations.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – An archeological reconnaissance of the project area was first completed in 1976. No archeological or historic materials or evidence of resource exploitations was found. The Alaska Heritage Resource Survey listed no sites in the project area; the National Register of Historic Places listed no sites in the project vicinity. Other archeological investigations have been completed for changes to the BIH facilities since 1976. The most recent being in 2012 and 2017 No archeological or historic materials or evidence of resource exploitations has been found.

No cultural resources were identified and a determination that No Historic Properties are Affected was made.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was listed as a proposal on the Tongass National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) in February 2019. An electronic mailing of the proposal was sent to a mailing list including people who have subscribed to be informed about this type of project. The Wrangell District Ranger consulted with the Wrangell tribal government for continuation of the occupancy and use. No written or electronic comments/correspondence have been received.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the 2016 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The project is located within the Old-Growth Habitat Land Use Designation (LUD) in the Forest Plan (Chapter 3, Pp. 3-58 to 3-63). The hatchery and associated facilities that are on National Forest System lands are allowable within the Old-Growth Habitat LUD as an exception for areas of non-conforming developments.

Objectives (Forest Plan, P.58)

To the extent feasible, limit roads, facilities, and authorized uses to those compatible with old-growth forest habitat management objectives,

LANDS... Special Use Authorization (Non-Recreation): LAND2 (Forest Plan, P. 3-61

- A. Permit only improvements (such as tent platforms, fish weirs, minor waterlines, minor powerlines, etc.) that are compatible with LUD objectives.

SCENERY... Scenery Operations: SCENE1 (Forest Plan, P. 3-61

- A. Apply Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for High Scenic Integrity Objective. Design activities to not be visually evident to the casual observer.
- B. Exceptions for small areas of non-conforming developments, such as recreational developments, transportation developments, log transfer facilities, and mining developments, may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Use designs and materials that are compatible with forms, colors, and textures found in the characteristic landscape.

LANDS... Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines... Special Use Administration (non-Recreation): LAND2 (Forest Plan, p. 4-26 to 4-27)

I. Special Use Authorizations

- A. Manage Special use Authorizations to best serve the public interest. (Consult 36 CFR 251.)
 - 5. Upon renewal or transfer of a permit, terminate or bring into compliance existing uses that are not compatible with the Forest Plan.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

This decision falls within a category of actions which are not subject to administrative review opportunities.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision may be implemented immediately.

CONTACT

For additional information contact:

David Rak, Lands, Special Uses, Minerals, Recreation, and Wilderness Forester
Wrangell Ranger District, P.O. Box 51, Wrangell, Alaska 99929 at 907-874-2323 or
drak@usda.gov



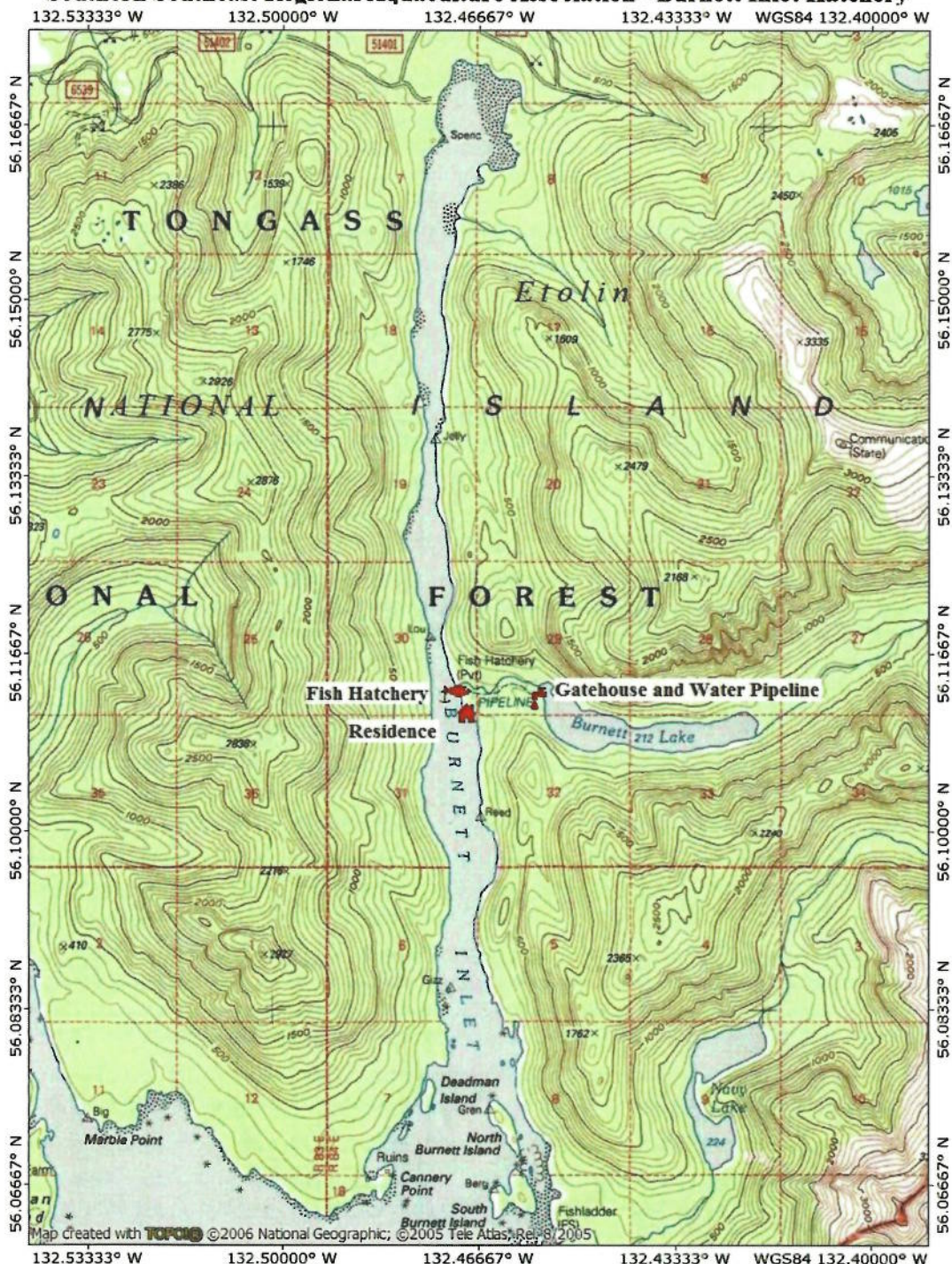
M. EARL STEWART
Forest Supervisor



Date

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Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association - Burnett Inlet Hatchery



Location Map

0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 miles
0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 km

TN* / MN
18 1/2°
01/26/18